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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001323

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DEPT FOR AF/SPG

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: SOUTHERN SUDAN: SHIFTS WITHIN THE SPLM FAVOR
SALVA KIIR

REF: (A) KHARTOUM 849 (B) KHARTOUM 887

Classified By: CGJ R. Whitehead for reasons 1.5 (B) and (D)

11. (C) Summary. The internal dynamic within the SPLM has shifted gradually since the March meeting of the reconstituted Politburo in Rumbek (ref a). The balance between the two most powerful factions (ref b)) followers of GoSS President Kiir and those loyal to the late John Garang) has altered in favor of Kiir. Nhial Deng, a Garang stalwart, has resigned from government and gone abroad. Rebecca Garang has also been absent from Juba for a protracted period, reportedly suffering from ill health. Other former Garang loyalists appear to be hedging their bets by moving closer to Kiir. End summary.

Nhial Deng Nhial Decamps

12. (C) SPLM insiders have been tight-lipped about the resignation of Minister of Regional Affairs Nhial Deng Nhial, who abandoned both his ministry and his seat in the South Sudan Legislative Assembly, although he did not resign from the SPLM. Deng is currently in Nairobi and has told friends that he plans to rejoin his family in the United Kingdom, where he will pursue an unspecified course of academic study.

13. (C) His letter of resignation did not specify the reason for his departure, but acquaintances say that his motives were threefold. First and foremost, Deng felt that he and his ministry had been purposely marginalized, with Kiir and Machar taking the lead in GoSS relations with neighboring countries. Secondly, Deng was reported to be upset by growing levels of corruption within the GoSS. Finally, Deng, one of the architects of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), was frustrated by the GoSS, inability to implement the CPA. Behind the scenes, a number of senior SPLM officials have reportedly made overtures to Deng to return. He has not accepted. His departure has provoked a deep rift within the SPLM, with his supporters acclaiming his actions as principled and his detractors accusing him of self-interest and betrayal.

Rebecca Garang out of Circulation

13. (C) Rebecca Garang, widow of John Garang and the GoSS Minister of Transportation, has also been out of Juba for several weeks. Her parliamentary colleagues recounted that upon her return from an April visit to President Museveni in Uganda, the normally resolute Rebecca expressed great public grief over the loss of her husband. She subsequently traveled to Nairobi and was reportedly hospitalized there for

exhaustion. She left for England on June 4 for two weeks of treatment there. Her absence has triggered a spate of rumors about her health and her future intentions, including whether she would continue with the very demanding transportation portfolio. Of late, she has been increasingly criticized for a lack of progress in this sector.

Other Shifts toward Kiir

14. (C) Other Garang loyalists who once predicted a power struggle between their faction and those loyal to Kiir, most notably Pagan Amum, have held their peace. Amum, now the number two behind Kiir in the SPLM hierarchy, has been less visible since Rumbek, although he did deliver one of the speeches at the April 16 SPLM day celebrations, which neither Nhial Deng nor Rebecca attended. Pagan has reportedly put out feelers to Kiir backers and stands ready to support Kiir's candidacy for the presidency in the next elections. Other former Garang followers, such as Michael Makwei, have apparently opted for pragmatism and rapprochement rather than confrontation, although Makwei frequently echoes Nhial Deng's concerns about growing corruption and weak GoSS performance.

The Conclusion

15. (C) Kiir has steadily strengthened his position within the SPLM over the past ten months. It is too soon to declare that the Garang faction has collapsed. However, in the absence of Rebecca, with the departure of Deng, and through

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the seeming shift by Amum, three of the most influential leaders of the Garang faction are for now out of the mix. In addition to Kiir, Riek Machar, who remains in the limelight through his hands on governance and his high-profile attempts at conflict resolution, also benefits from the SPLM's shifting internal dynamics.
STEINFELD